



Office of the State Fire Marshal

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TEMPORARY HAUNTED HOUSES MUST STILL FOLLOW 'LIFE SAFETY CODE,' SAYS STATE FIRE MARSHAL

Employee and Customer Safety must be Priority for Building Owners and Event Operators

SPRINGFIELD – As thousands of families prepare to enjoy Halloween attractions and events, the Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal (OSFM) is reminding Illinois residents to be vigilant when entering temporary haunted houses.

“We want to make sure that families and children are safe and protected when entering haunted houses or other temporary structures constructed for the short Halloween season,” said Illinois Fire Marshal Larry Matkaitis. “It is important for haunted house operators to follow Illinois’ fire and life safety code requirements.”

OSFM also calls on local enforcement agencies and haunted house owners and operators to follow safety code guidelines, especially when temporary structures are created by combustible materials such as plywood and cardboard. Those occupancies can present special hazards that make them particularly vulnerable to fires and injuries if applicable codes are not followed.

Because of their temporary nature, haunted houses are considered “Special Amusement Buildings” owners must be reminded that haunted house occupancies are not exempt from fire sprinkler systems or fire detection system requirements. Furthermore, haunted houses are usually designed to be dark and offer low visibility to visitors and frequently are set up in maze-like designs that can be confusing to the occupants.

According to the *Life Safety Code* under the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), the following requirements should be met in haunted houses:

- There must be an adequate number and width of means of egress to accommodate occupant loads within the building
- There must be panic hardware on exit doors
- There are restrictions on dead-end pathways
- Stairway construction must include riser height and tread depth, provision of handrails, and fire rated enclosure in some situations

- The use of open flame devices or pyrotechnic special effects is restricted, unless the operator has specific permitting and licensing for the use of indoor pyrotechnics under Illinois law, which prohibits the use of pyrotechnics in buildings that are not protected by an automatic sprinkler system.
- Furnishings and decorations including all draperies and curtains are required to be flame resistant.
- In accordance with both Life Safety Code requirements and Illinois' Furniture Fire Safety Act, any upholstered furniture in the occupancy must comply with testing and labeling requirements.

For further information regarding the requirements applicable to haunted houses, or any special amusement building, contact the Office of the State Fire Marshal's Fire Prevention Division Manager Misty Matykiewicz at (217) 558-0639, the Technical Services Division at (312) 814-8960, or visit <http://www.sfm.illinois.gov>.